

The surgeon general's office announced that adults are smoking fewer cigarettes. Annual per capita consumption has fallen from 214 packs to 198 packs. Adults, I assume, are having to take the blame for the ones that kids are smoking.

Without hiring a bunch of detectives, no poll could be made of the number of cigarettes that are being used on the sly. In other days you could tell how much boys were smoking by the amount of cedar bark that was being peeled off posts, but today juvenile cedar bark smoking has fallen out of custom.

The surgeon general was the last person to find out that cigarettes were hurting us smokers. He didn't put the warning label on the packages until the decade of the '60s. Most of us who smoke knew within several months after we started that it was bad for our health. I can't understand how a big shot doctor like that had to wait all those years to discover that cigarettes were a health menace. If he's that dense, I hope he doesn't move to Shortgrass Country to practice medicine. Anybody that ill informed probably doesn't know that rattlesnakes are poisonous. He'd be some doctor to call in on a severe case of tax meningitis or an acute outbreak of inflation fever. (Tax meningitis and inflation fever are new disease. Doctors are uncovering more cases every day.)

People quitting smoking has been as dangerous as the habit. Not too long ago, a fellow directing brush control for a chemical company was by the ranch. He was caught in the throes of a personal reform movement and had forsaken cigarettes for chewing tobacco. By chewing three packs of Redman daily, he'd kicked a two-pack-a-day Viceroy habit.

Withdrawal symptoms were noticeable in his driving. We left the ranch to go look at some brush projects. Our upgrade, headwind speed at takeoff was close to the 75 miles per hour mark. On the highway, he was spinning the right rear tire in the gravel every time he had to spit. I told him after we were about seven miles from the headquarters that I believed I'd just walk on back to the house, that it'd been a long time since I'd seen that scope of country on foot.

The surgeon general would be more help pointing out the unknown hazards that pop up in a lifetime. His staff could have saved Shortgrassers a lot of suffering by trying by trying to talk people out of ruining their health pulling such foolish stunts as sheep ranching or goat herding. Watch and see what happens. Some of the most pitiful wrecks of humanity will be hombres who have to face what 20-cent wool is going to do to the sheep business. Writing a warning label on an old ewe wouldn't be practicable, but warning signs could be put across the country. At least the young people could be diverted into a useful way of life.

Actually, attacking the sheep industry wouldn't be as hard as the tobacco fight. The government already knows how to ban advertising. To forbid the promotion councils from going around claiming that one ewe can raise four lambs wouldn't be much more difficult than it was to stop the tobacco companies from claiming that inhaling smoke would give you springtime freshness.

The penalty for violators could be spending a dry spring on the Shortgrass sheep ranges. The promoters might see four lambs following one ewe, but they'd be better informed after they learned that it was the nieces and nephews following around after their aunt, not a nursing mother and child arrangement.

Man has always shown great gusto for forbidden fruits. Eve and the Snake didn't have much trouble getting old Adam to eat the famous apple. Probably all Eve had to say was, "Adam, you know what your doctor said about not eating fresh fruit."

At this stage of life, I don't plan on doing any volunteer quitting. Age takes care of the quitting aspects far too fast. Government doctors could find a bountiful field of perils in the ranching game. I just hope they aren't as slow finding this out as they were about smoking.